

# Rhodesia: Looking Beyond The April Election

## An Intelligence Assessment

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Assessment  
Center

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ORCON

# Rhodesia: Looking Beyond The April Election (U)

**An Intelligence Assessment**

*Research for this report was completed  
on 3 April 1979.*

The author of this paper is [REDACTED]  
Africa Division, Office of Political Analysis, with  
contributions from Western Europe and USSR  
Divisions. Comments and queries are welcome and  
should be directed to [REDACTED]  
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National Intelligence Officer for Africa. (U)

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**Rhodesia:  
Looking Beyond  
The April Election (U)**

**Key Judgments**

The election later this month of a black-led government of national unity in Rhodesia will bring substantial pressure on the United States and the United Kingdom to recognize the new government and to lift economic sanctions:

- The Rhodesians will make an all-out effort to ensure adequate security and a large turnout for the election.
- Although the Zimbabwe African National Union and the Zimbabwe African People's Union will try to disrupt the election, neither guerrilla group will be able to prevent it from taking place. (s)

Bishop Muzorewa is the most likely candidate to emerge as the head of the new government:

- He will seek to consolidate his position by strengthening his relationship with the whites, establishing greater control over the countryside, and inducing defections from ZANU and ZAPU.
- He may try to split the guerrillas further by offering to strike a separate deal with ZANU or ZAPU.
- We doubt, however, that the white leaders will show enough flexibility to allow Muzorewa to propose a deal acceptable to either guerrilla leader. (s)

The election of a new government, coupled with a continuation of the fighting, will create some hard choices for those states most closely involved with the Rhodesian problem:

- The frontline states will continue to support the guerrillas, but an intensification of the fighting could force some presidents into an open-ended commitment to an increased Soviet and Cuban presence in their countries.
- The frontline states might also have to consider the possibility of supporting one guerrilla group against the other in the event of a civil war. (u)

If the Soviets and the Cubans continue to favor ZAPU over ZANU, they risk alienating Tanzania and Mozambique, which would like to see more support given to ZANU:

- If they agree to support both groups, however, they could become involved in a civil war.
- If Nkomo makes a separate deal with the Salisbury government, they might find themselves forced to throw their support behind ZANU. (u)

The US and the UK must decide whether to recognize the newly elected government and lift economic sanctions:

- A positive decision would strengthen the position of the new government, but provoke a hostile reaction from black African leaders outside Rhodesia.
- A negative decision would undercut the viability of the new regime, but not deter the frontline states from supporting further efforts to reach a negotiated settlement. (u)

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Prospects for a successful all-parties conference or agreement on the part of the internal government to UN-sponsored elections are exceedingly dim:

- Short-term prospects are for a continuation of the stalemate, particularly now that South Africa has promised to provide substantial military and political support to the new government.
- The fighting certainly will continue, providing expanding opportunities for the Soviets and the Cubans.

(S NF NC OC)

Tanzania



Nyerere, Julius

Patriotic  
Front



Nkomo, Joshua

Zambia



Kaunda, Kenneth

Patriotic  
Front



Mugabe, Robert

Mozambique



Machel, Samora

Rhodesia



Smith, Ian

# R H O D E S I A

United National  
Federal Party



Ndiweni, Kayisa

Botswana



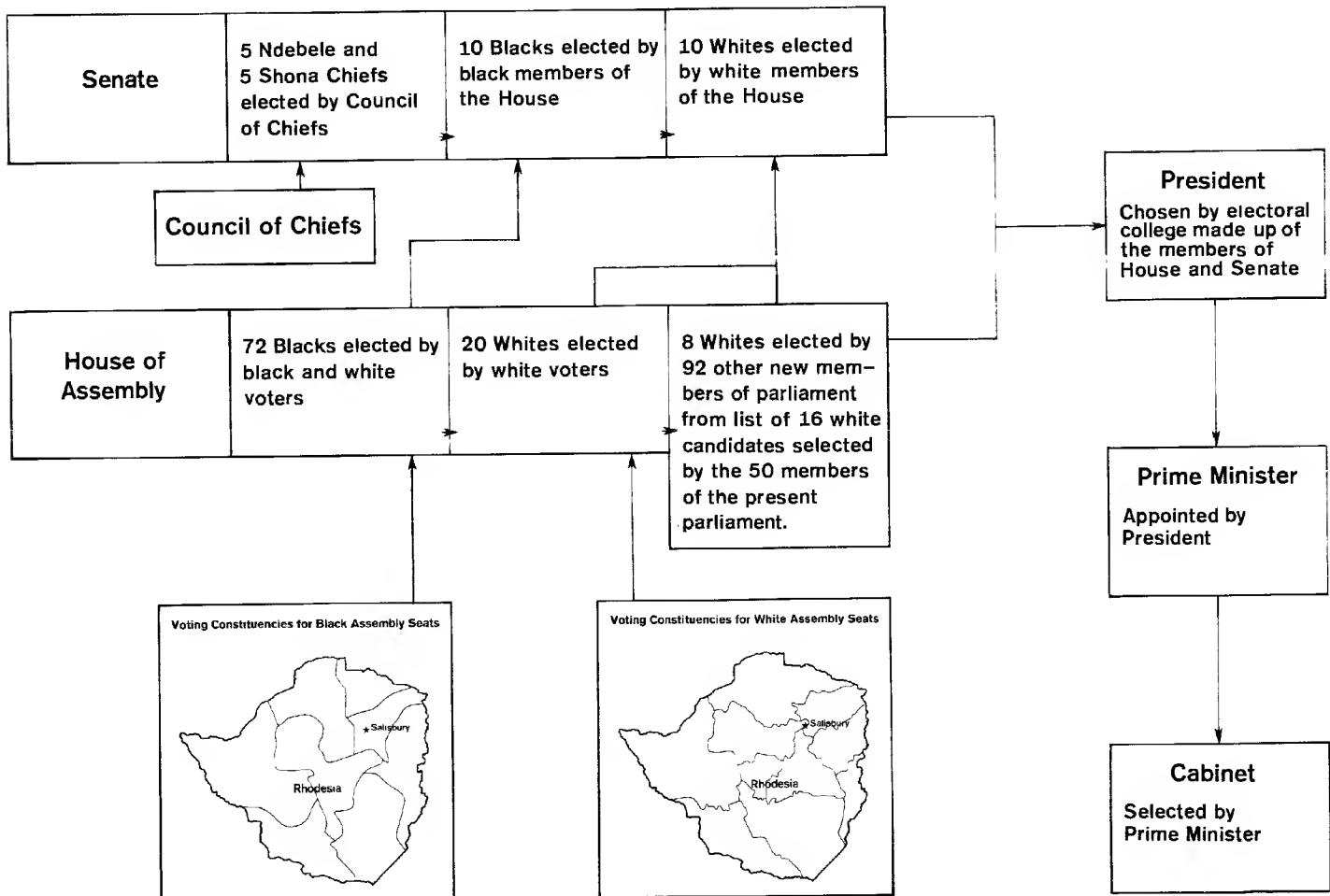
Khama, Seretse

South Africa



Botha, Pieter

## Formation of Government of Zimbabwe Rhodesia



**Rhodesia:  
Looking Beyond  
The April Election (U)**

The Rhodesian Government is making an all-out effort to ensure adequate security and a large turnout for the election. Government pressure and intimidation by the black parties and their auxiliary forces should result in a fairly high turnout. The government estimates a total black turnout of about 60 percent, with the highest percentage being urban blacks and blacks living in white farming areas. Over 70 percent of the eligible white voters turned out for the constitutional referendum last January and at least that many should vote in the election. (S NF NC OC)

All military and police leaves have been canceled during the election period, and all civilian reservists have been called up to provide security and to police the polling stations during the election. We estimate that a manpower pool totaling some 75,000 Rhodesians will be mobilized. These forces will be assisted by about 10,000 ex-guerrillas and local recruits who are loyal to internal black leaders Bishop Muzorewa and Reverend Sithole. (S)

As the election approaches, Rhodesian security forces will intensify their raids on guerrilla camps and staging areas in Zambia and Mozambique, and possibly in Angola, Tanzania, and Botswana. By forcing the guerrillas to relocate their command posts farther from the border and to disperse their camps, guerrilla communication links and supply lines will be lengthened, resulting in an erosion of guerrilla capabilities and morale. (S)

Although ZANU and ZAPU are committed to disrupting the election, it is unlikely either can prevent it from taking place. ZANU and ZAPU now have at least 10,000 guerrillas inside Rhodesia. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] we believe the Rhodesian security forces will be able to maintain sufficient control to proceed with the polling in most if not all regions of the country. (S)

[REDACTED]

The number of guerrilla attacks on "soft" targets of psychological and economic importance to the whites, however, is certain to increase. (S)

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***The Election Process***

White Rhodesians reportedly will go to the polls on 10 April to elect 20 white members to the House of Assembly. Four of these seats are contested by independents, but Ian Smith's Rhodesian Front Party should have little difficulty in winning all 20 seats. The 72 black members of the House will be elected sometime after 12 April by both black and white Rhodesians. The election probably will be held over a five-day period beginning 17 April. Security forces will be rotated from one region of the country to another — possibly by military district—to ensure maximum security around the polling stations. (S)

Both the white and black members will be elected directly from party lists established for each constituency.\* A party must win at least 10 percent of the vote in a given constituency to qualify for a seat. Parliamentary seats within each constituency will be allocated on the basis of the proportion of votes received by the parties in that constituency. (U)

The 72 black and 20 white members of the House then will caucus to elect eight additional white members from a list of 16 candidates chosen by the white members of the present parliament. The Senate will consist of 10 blacks elected by the 72 black members of the lower house, 10 whites elected by the 28 white members, and five Ndebele and five Shona chiefs elected by their tribal counterparts in the Council of Chiefs. Both houses jointly elect a "constitutional" President who then appoints as Prime Minister the person "in his discretion, he considers to be best able to command the support of the majority of the members."

\* Maps of the white and black electoral constituencies and the five military operational areas appear at the end of this memorandum.

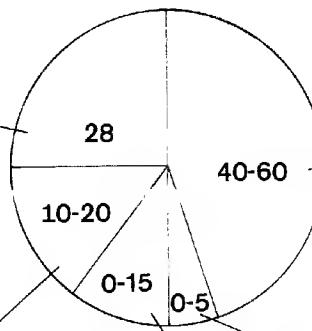
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### Probable Distribution of Seats in New Rhodesian Parliament



Prime Minister Ian Smith  
(Rhodesian Front)

Under pressure from some whites to leave politics, but so far has resisted. Most, if not all, RF candidates are running unopposed.



Bishop Abel Muzorewa  
(United African National Council)



Chief Jeremiah Chirau  
(Zimbabwe United People's Organization)

Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole  
(Zimbabwe African National Union/Sithole)

Broke with ZANU external organization in 1977. Popularity appears to be on the decline inside Rhodesia.

Chief Kayisa Ndiweni  
(United National Federal Party)

Broke with Chirau and the transitional govt. early this year to form a Ndebele-based party. Would be a stalking horse for Nkomo in the election.

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recently has taken a more independent position calling for an all parties conference before the election and the disbanding of all auxiliary forces.

of the House of Assembly." The President also appoints the Cabinet, acting on the advice of the Prime Minister. (u)

Although the new Parliament will be numerically dominated by blacks, the whites will retain substantial—if not controlling— influence over the new government. Continued white domination of the military, police, judiciary, and civil service is ensured by the Constitution, which establishes criteria such as senior rank, longevity, and "efficiency and suitability" for appointment to top positions in these fields. (u)

Moreover, none of the important clauses in the new constitution can be amended or deleted without the approval of all 72 black and at least six white members of the House of Assembly. These so-called entrenched clauses, which guarantee the whites 28 seats in the House, will remain in effect for at least 10 years, after which a commission—consisting of three whites and two blacks—will be established and empowered to recommend changes. The Constitution also states that posts in the Cabinet will be allocated according to each party's strength in the House of Assembly, thus guaranteeing the whites at least four positions in the new Cabinet. (u)

Most whites probably are not enthusiastic about a black-led government taking power in Rhodesia, but they appear willing to give the new government a chance. White emigration dropped considerably this year after a dramatic rise last fall—peaking at 2,771 net departures in December. Net departures for January and February totaled only 1,073 and 592 whites, respectively. (u)

#### ***Muzorewa on Top***

Bishop Abel Muzorewa should emerge in a strong position of leadership in the new government of national unity, with his party winning at least half the black seats in Parliament. His closest rival, Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole, has lost ground in recent months, and his party probably will win less than a third of the black seats. Chief Jeremiah Chirau, the other black leader in the internal government, lacks broad popular support but should pick up a few seats. Chief Ndiweni, who broke with Chirau last November to form his own Ndebele-based party, has not developed a strong political base, but his party could win enough seats to gain a post in the Cabinet. (s)

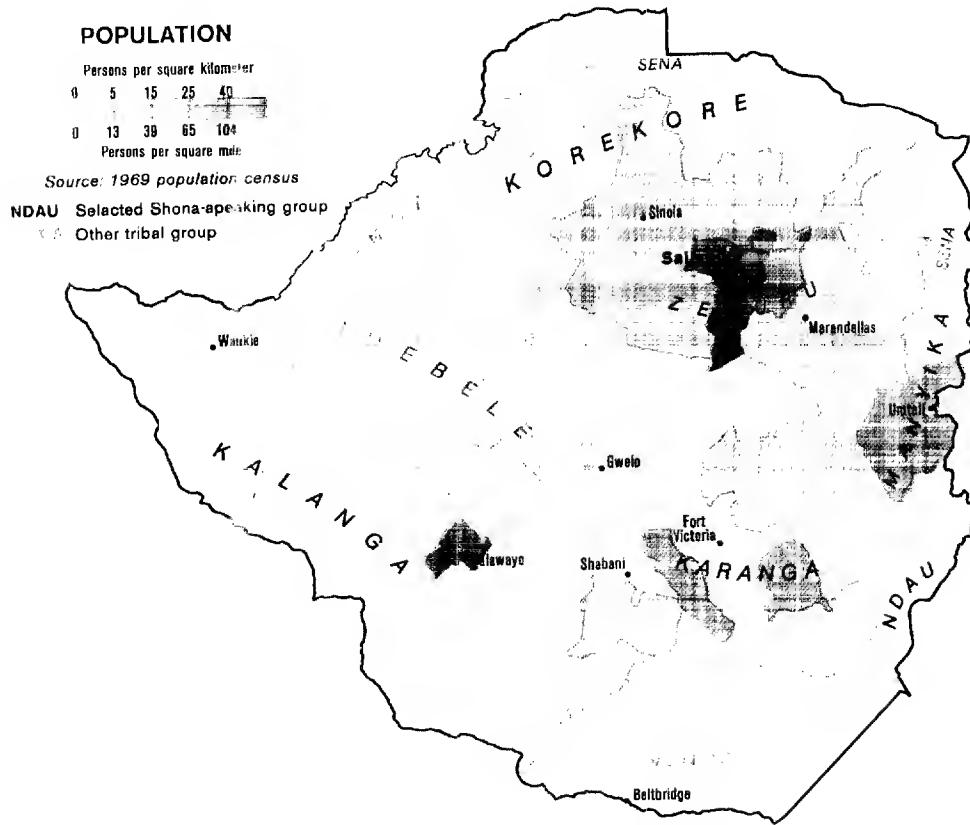
Muzorewa hopes to establish more government control over the countryside by augmenting the size and expanding the role of the auxiliary forces. He also hopes to attract more black supporters—including guerrilla defectors—by offering land and social services. The Bishop is expected to announce a major amnesty program soon after taking office that would encourage the guerrillas to return, but not require them to turn in their arms. The government is hoping that many of these guerrillas would agree to join the auxiliary forces. (s)

Muzorewa has already entered into negotiations with the white leaders, focusing on cooperation between their parties and a possible modification of some clauses in the new Constitution that work to the disadvantage of the blacks. The Bishop realizes that he will need white support for his government and wants to meet with the white leaders before the election to discuss possible ministerial appointments, to plan future government policies, and to map a joint strategy for obtaining international recognition for the new government. (s NF NC OC)

Once in power, Muzorewa should be able to capitalize on several trends that have become apparent in recent months, including:

- A deepening political and military rivalry between ZANU and ZAPU. With the virtual collapse of negotiations for a political settlement, each group has come increasingly to perceive the other as a rival in the struggle for control of a black-ruled Rhodesia.
- Continuing disarray within the ZAPU leadership that has weakened Nkomo's position internationally and within his own organization, making it almost impossible for ZAPU to implement its more grandiose military plans.
- The decline of Nkomo's appeal to whites in Rhodesia since the downing of two civilian airliners by his guerrillas.
- Growing weariness in Zambia over the economic and political costs of the guerrilla struggle, which could eventually lead to a political backlash against President Kaunda.

## Population Distribution in Zimbabwe Rhodesia



ETHNIC GROUP	PERCENT OF BLACK POPULATION
Shona	75
Karanga	25
Zezeru	21
Manyika	11
Ndau	6
Korekore	5
Other	5
<b>Ndebele</b>	<b>14</b>
Kalanga	7
Other (Tonga, Venda, Sena)	4

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- Growing support for the internal settlement in the US Congress and the British Parliament.
- South African promises to provide substantial political and military support—short of military intervention—to the new government of national unity. (s)

The South Africans have also said that they no longer would press Prime Minister Smith to withdraw from politics so long as his presence does not hinder the new government's chance of success. Prime Minister Botha has indicated, however, that South Africa will withhold diplomatic recognition from the new government; we expect Botha to wait until the new government has won some international acceptance and demonstrated a capacity to govern. (s NF NC OC)

These factors account for a growing confidence among whites that the internal settlement eventually might succeed. A continuation of these trends could lead to a hardening of white attitudes and a growing reluctance to seek a political deal with the guerrillas. Given the probability that the level of fighting inside Rhodesia will escalate, however, most whites probably will continue to support efforts to negotiate a political settlement with the blacks. (u)

#### **Possible Realignments**

The formation of a black-led government will open the door to more jockeying among the various players in the Rhodesian situation. Muzorewa, in particular, probably will try to split the guerrillas further by seeking a separate alliance with ZANU or ZAPU. (s)

Representatives of the Bishop have already made approaches to ZANU to discuss a possible Shona-based alliance, which could draw on 75 percent of the black population for support. Although ZANU so far has rejected Muzorewa's attempts to induce it—or a significant faction of the guerrilla group—to join his new government, some senior officials have indicated they would not rule out talks at some future date. (s NF NC OC)

Joshua Nkomo might try to preempt such an alliance by seeking to make his own deal either with Muzorewa, or with the whites, thus bringing the Ndebeles and the Shonas into a single government.

White Rhodesian politicians would favor such a coalition because they see Nkomo as a unifying force and regard Mugabe as too radical. (s)

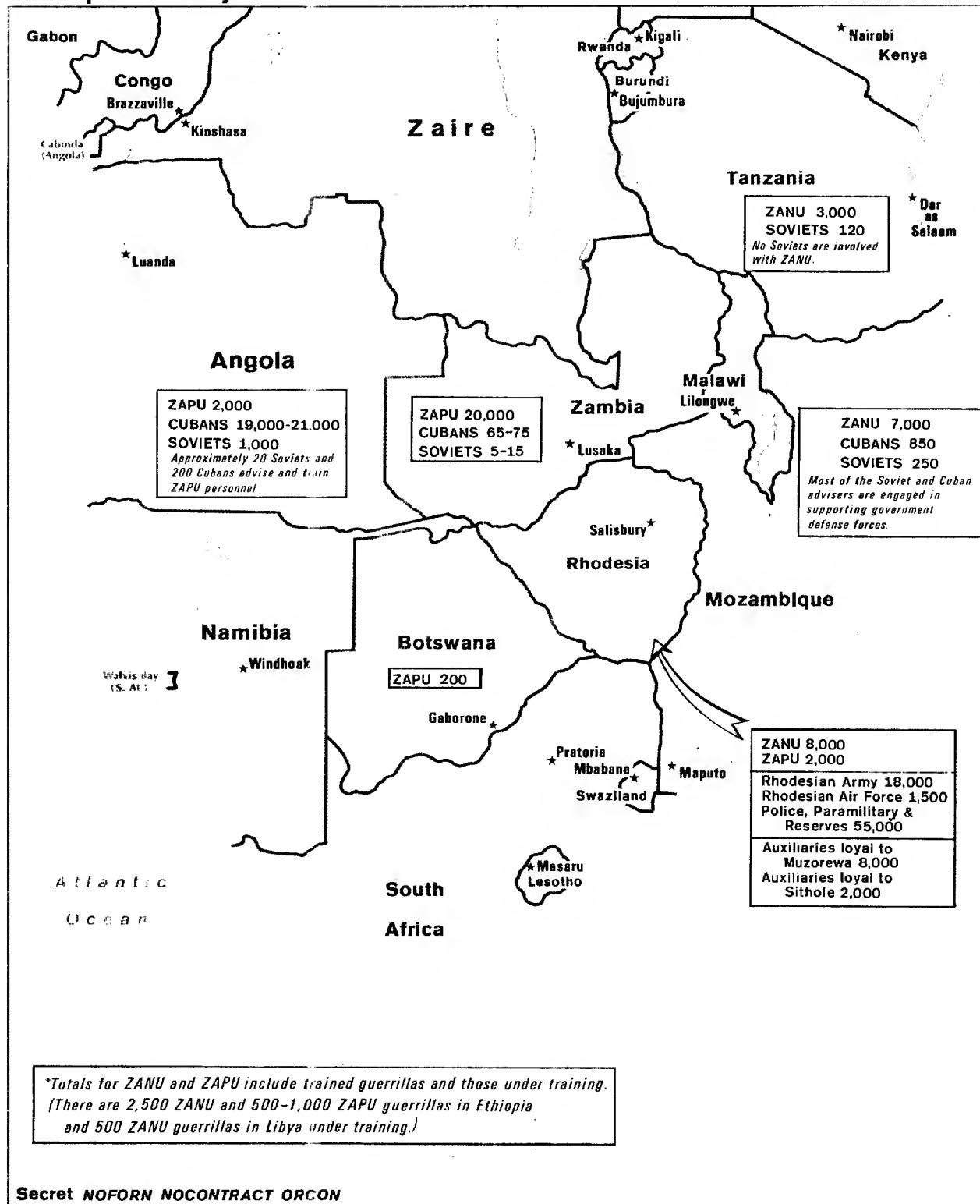
The pressure on Mugabe or Nkomo to consider joining forces with the internal government is likely to mount the more each leader perceives the other as trying to preempt him in reaching a settlement. Neither of these realignments, however, would tip the balance of power in Rhodesia sufficiently to bring an end to the fighting because each excludes a major participant who could attract enough foreign support to continue the guerrilla war. Nevertheless, either could change the complexion of the war from one of equilibrium and growing strength on the guerrillas' side to one of strength for the new government in Salisbury. (u)

#### **Hard Choices Ahead**

The election of a government of national unity, coupled with a continuation of the fighting, will create some hard choices for the parties involved with the Rhodesian problem. The frontline states will continue to support the guerrillas, but an intensification of the fighting could force Presidents Kaunda of Zambia and Machel of Mozambique into an open-ended commitment to an increased Soviet and Cuban presence in their countries. Kaunda has consistently resisted any augmentation of the Soviet and Cuban role in Zambia, but he might feel forced to reverse himself if it appeared this was the only way to resolve the conflict and remove the military threat posed to his country by the Rhodesians. Machel is less concerned about the Soviet and Cuban presence, largely because of his ideological commitment to ZANU, but he probably is anxious to prevent it from endangering the pragmatic economic ties he has established with South Africa. (s)

In the hope of minimizing the military spillover into their countries, Kaunda and Machel might consider urging Nkomo and Mugabe to strike a separate deal with the government in Salisbury. Such an approach, however, would risk seriously antagonizing the other frontline states. The frontline presidents also have to consider the possibility of supporting one guerrilla group against the other in a contest for power in Rhodesia. (s)

### Principal Military Forces Involved in Rhodesian Conflict\*



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***The Soviet and Cuban Role***

The common objective of Moscow and Havana is to secure influence in a black-ruled Rhodesia, and they have decided that backing ZAPU leader Nkomo is the best means to that end. The election of a government of national unity will not force any immediate changes on the Soviets or the Cubans. The fighting will continue, and they will support the guerrillas, hoping that the military pressure will bring a settlement favorable to Nkomo. They will play on African fears of Western recognition of the new government to maintain the momentum of the military option. (s)

Beyond that, the options available to the Soviets and Cubans have not fully taken form. They will take their cue from the response of the Africans to efforts by the new government to entice the guerrilla leaders to return to Rhodesia. Should Nkomo return, Moscow and Havana probably would prefer to support him. Even though Nyerere and Machel would disagree, the Soviets would weigh the opportunities to improve their credibility and influence with Zambia against the belief that any friction with Tanzania and Mozambique would only be temporary. (s)

Nevertheless, Nkomo's return to Rhodesia carries with it the risk that Nkomo would cut his ties with the Soviets and the Cubans in the process, thereby leading them to support ZANU. This assumes that ZANU's military effort does not evaporate as a result of large-scale defections to the new government. At the present time, Moscow and Havana cannot support both ZAPU and ZANU because of the rivalry between them and the potential it holds for an eventual contest between them for power in Rhodesia. (s)

***Pressures on the United States and Britain***

The newly elected government in Rhodesia will press the US and the UK to recognize it and lift economic sanctions. It will argue that the election meets the demands of the US and UK for a transfer of power to a black government on the basis of one man, one vote. (u)

Recognizing the new government and lifting sanctions certainly would strengthen it. There would be greater white resolve to support the black-led government and a greater willingness among whites in the military to defend it. Government prospects for attracting large numbers of guerrilla defectors could also be enhanced if the economy improved sufficiently to allow the government to improve social services for the blacks. (u)

The lifting of sanctions would improve the chances of stemming Rhodesia's economic decline and give a major psychological boost to the internal regime. Worldwide demand has been increasing for man-made goods produced by the Rhodesians such as copper, gold, and chrome. (u)

At the same time, such a decision would seriously erode the "special relationship" the US has fostered with black African leaders—particularly Zambian President Kaunda, Tanzanian President Nyerere, and Nigerian President Obasanjo. They would conclude that the US and the UK had chosen to support the "enemy" and thus would come under increasing pressure from the guerrillas and the Soviets to pursue a military solution in Rhodesia. (u)

While some African leaders might support lifting sanctions if it were followed by US and UK efforts to include ZANU or ZAPU in the new government, the frontline African leaders would be further antagonized by such a strategy. A call for a new constitution—providing for a more rapid transition to full black rule and approved by both blacks and whites—might dispel some of the frontline presidents' resentment, but it would still leave the US and the UK very much in disfavor. (s)

Faced with a refusal by the US and the UK to lift sanctions, the internal government would have difficulty taking hold. White emigration probably would increase as the level of fighting escalated. Whites in the military would begin to question why they were fighting for a black-led government that was unable to win external support. (u)

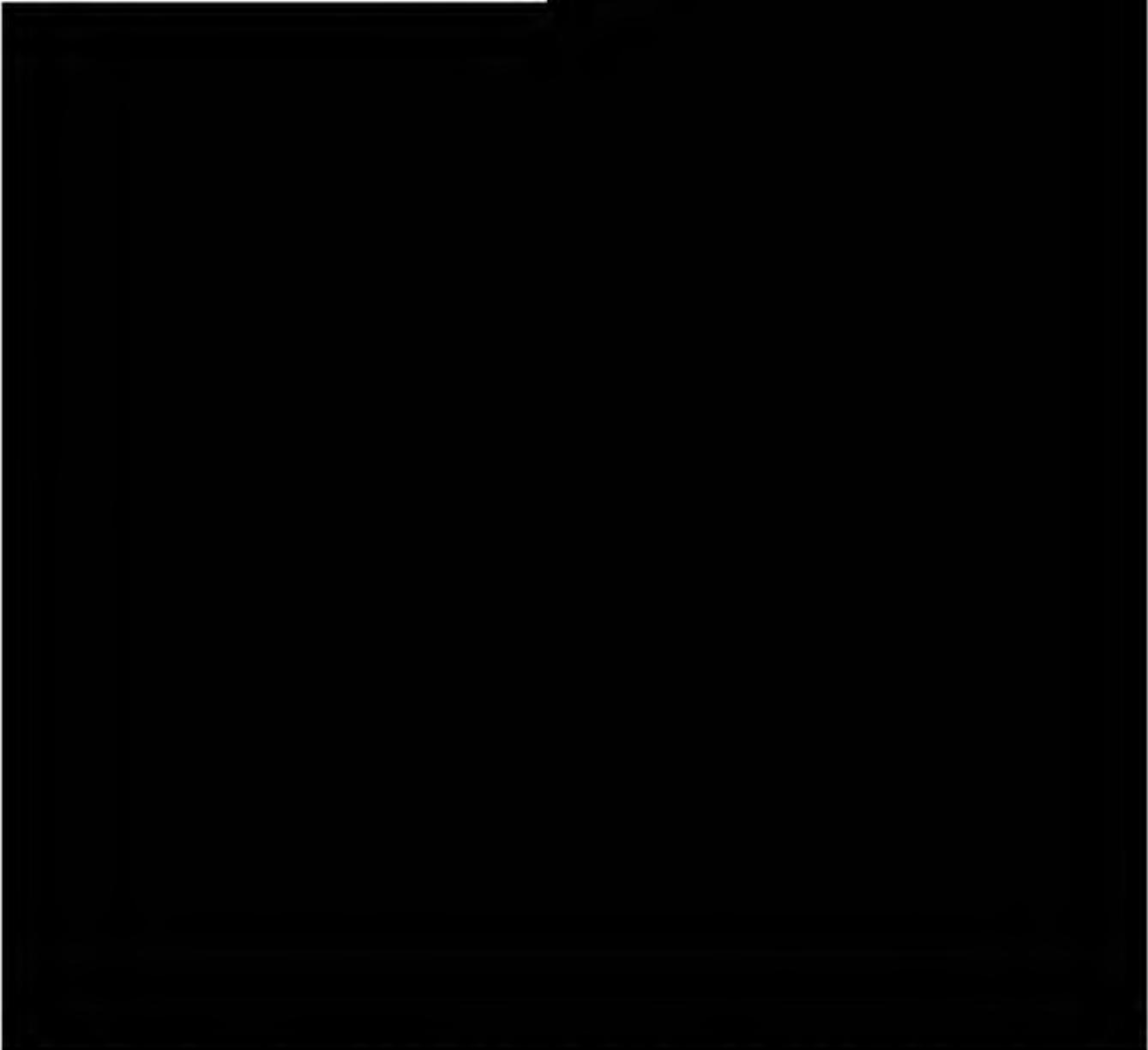
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The frontline states and Nigeria would continue to support Anglo-American efforts toward a political settlement, on the basis that the election was merely one step in a process that eventually would involve the guerrillas in a negotiated settlement. They probably would remain highly skeptical, however, that such efforts would succeed. Meanwhile, regardless of what the US and the UK choose to do, Soviet and Cuban involvement with the guerrilla forces—and with their hosts—would continue to grow. (1)

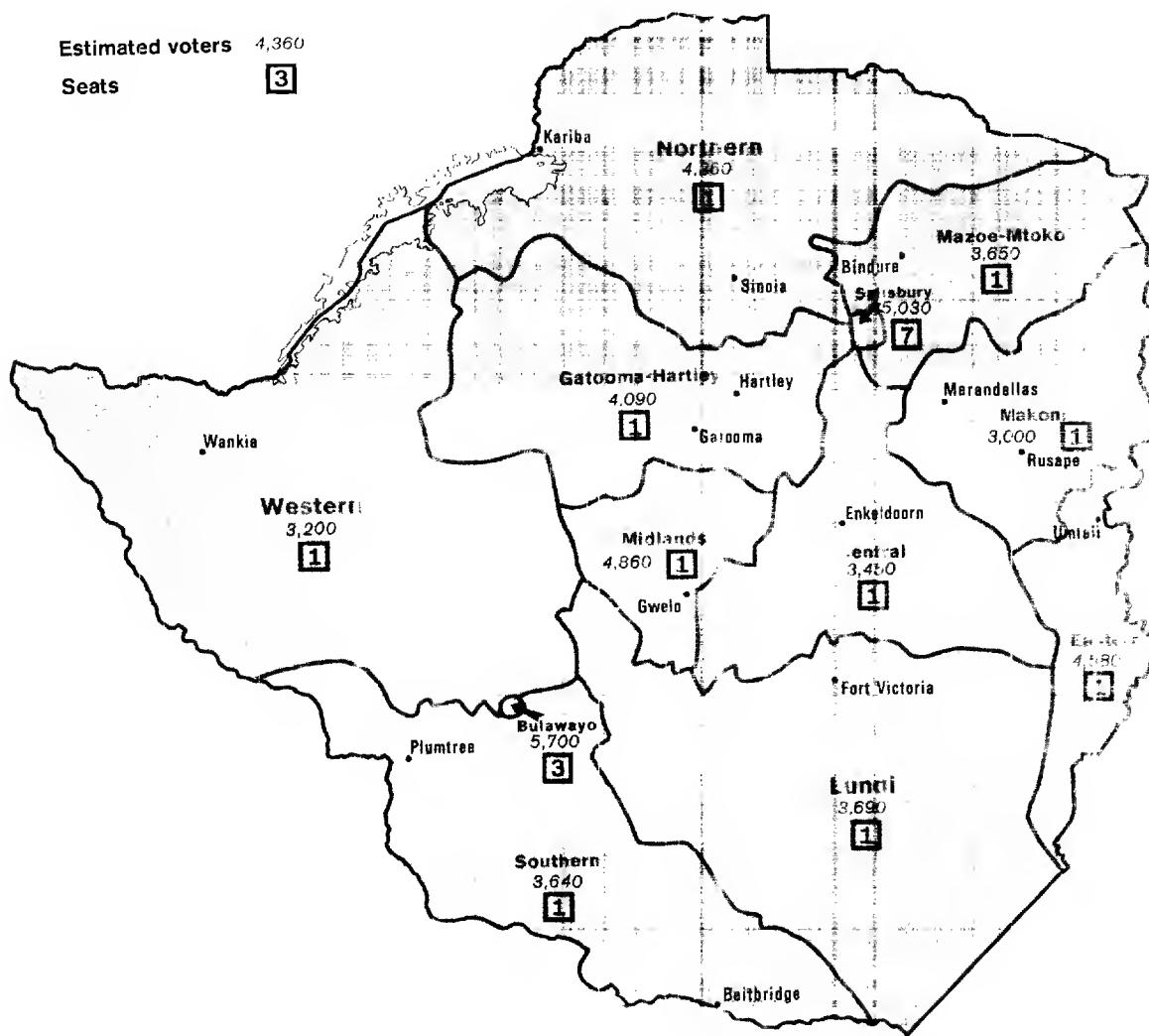
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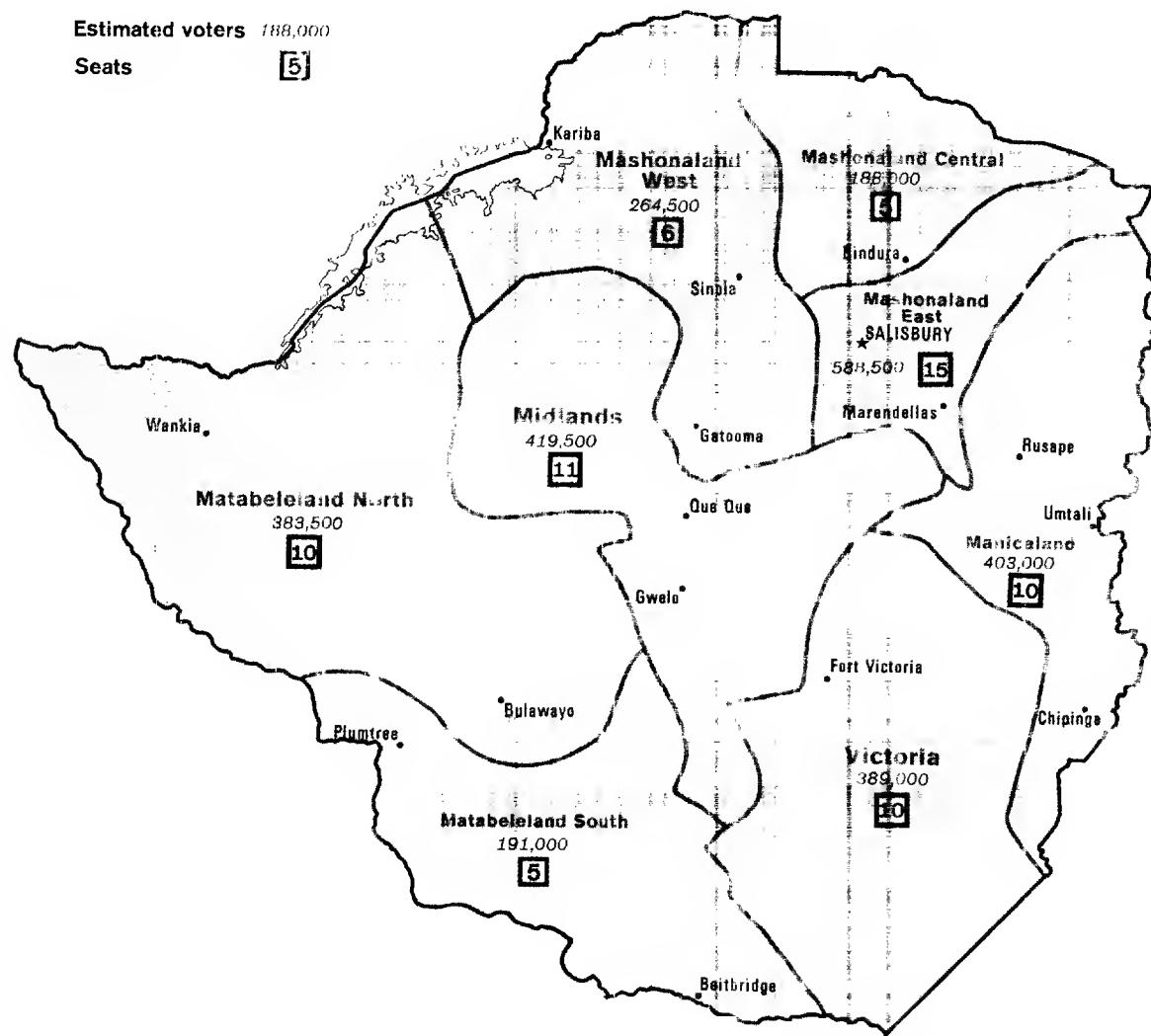
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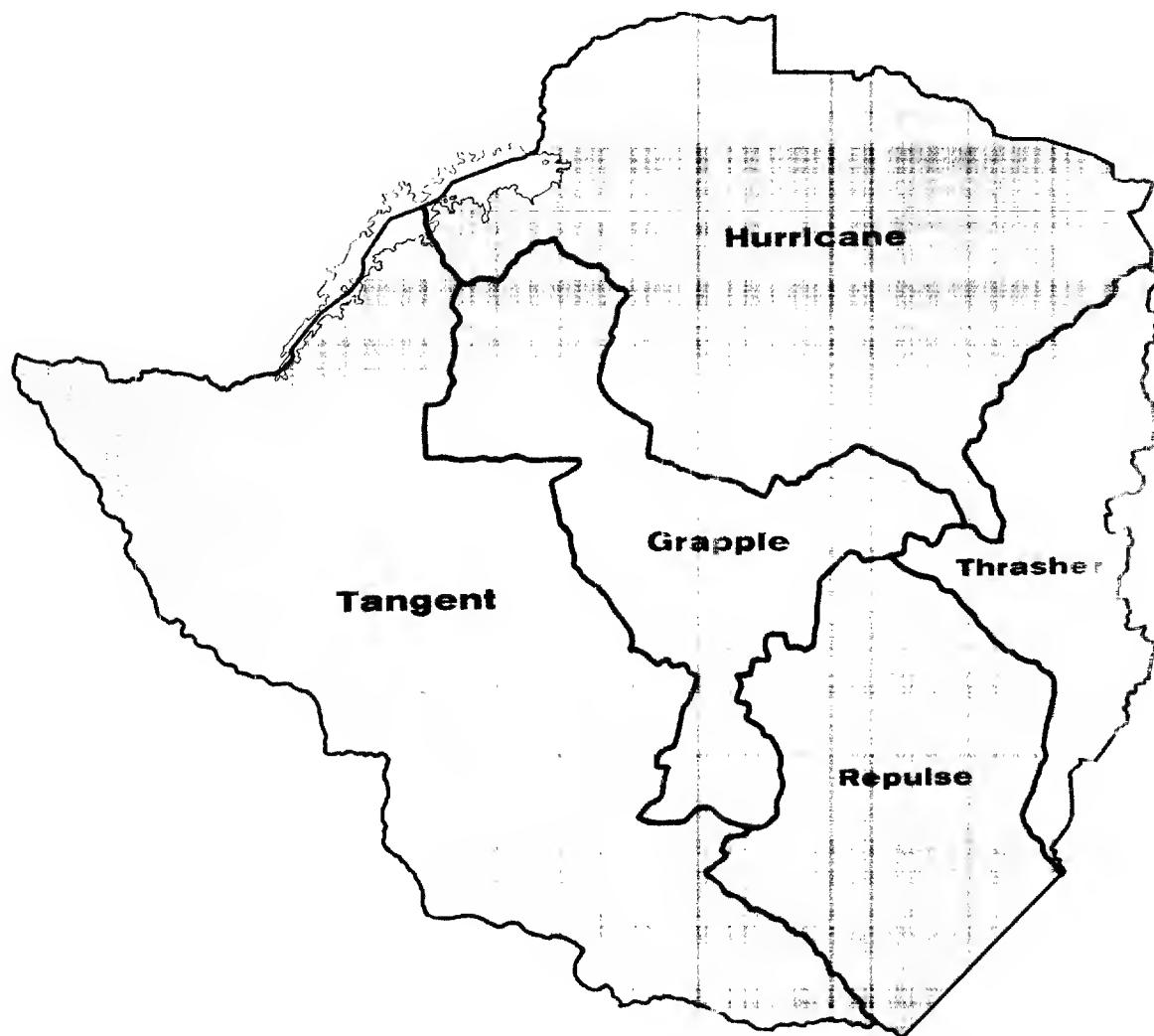
**Constituencies for the Election of 20 White Members to the  
Zimbabwe Rhodesia House of Assembly**



**Constituencies for the Election of 72 Black Members to the  
Zimbabwe Rhodesia House of Assembly**



Operational Areas in Zimbabwe Rhodesia



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